

Summit in Washington: Yes, but There Are Strings

U.S. Lawmakers Tie Soviet Trade Pact to Kremlin Progress on Lithuania

By SUSAN F. RASKY

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 2 — Members of Congress warned today that Congressional approval of an agreement expanding American trade with the Soviet Union would hinge on President Mikhail S. Gorbachev's willingness to end Moscow's economic crackdown on Lithuania.

The trade agreement, which paves the way for granting the Soviet Union preferential trade terms, was one of the accords signed on Friday by President Bush and Mr. Gorbachev. The agreement is an important symbolic victory for the Soviet leader, who faces mounting political and economic problems at home.

"He desperately wants that trade legislation, and whether or not Congress responds is up to him," said Senator Bob Dole of Kansas, the Republican leader.

Mr. Bush has already told Mr. Gorbachev that the trade legislation would not be submitted to Congress until the Soviet Government wrote into law new policies to ease emigration. American lawmakers who met with Mr. Gorbachev here on Friday said they expected that move to be completed quickly.

No Agreement on Capitol Hill

The real difficulty is Lithuania, and there is no agreement on Capitol Hill about precisely what steps Mr. Gorbachev would have to take to satisfy enough members of Congress to obtain approval of the trade pact.

"I think it has to be the beginning of some kind of negotiation on Lithuania, but there is really no way to define it," said Representative Richard A. Gephardt of Missouri, the House Democratic leader. "We're going to know it when we see it."

The most difficult obstacle may be the Senate, where members approved a resolution last month saying the Administration should not submit the trade legislation to Congress until Moscow lifts its partial economic embargo on Lithuania and resumes negotiations on Lithuanian independence. Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato, the New York Republican who was the author of the resolution, told a crowd of pro-Lithuanian demonstrators on the steps of the Capitol today that both conditions must be met.

"We cannot permit the Soviets to deprive people of their basic human rights," he said. "There will be one serious battle in the Senate unless the economic embargo is lifted."

Mr. Gorbachev has demanded that the Lithuanians follow a new Soviet law

tors who voted for it would need some signal by Moscow that policy had changed to justify backing away from it. Mr. Bentsen said he made that clear to both the Administration and Mr. Gorbachev on Friday.

"I told Mr. Gorbachev that I would hold hearings on the Most Favored Nation status as soon as the legislation is submitted," Mr. Bentsen said. "But a lot of my colleagues have taken a position on the Lithuania resolution, and I also told him that something has to be done on his side to justify a change in that position."

In comments to reporters on Friday, Mr. Dole suggested that senators would need "ironclad assurances" from Mr. Gorbachev that he would en-

ter negotiations on independence with Lithuania.

But Senator Rudy Boschwitz, Republican of Minnesota, had other criteria. He said that in his view the preferential trade terms were not "going to be granted as long as they give aid to Cuba and Ethiopia and Cambodia."

"I think that's a very compelling part of the equation," he said.

Although the House has also passed a resolution on Lithuania, it is more general than the Senate's and makes no direct reference to the trade agreement. Mr. Gephardt said President Bush made the right decision in going ahead with the signing of the agreement and that Congress should approve the legislation even if the situation in Lithuania

was not completely resolved when the measure was submitted.

'You Gain New Strings'

"We can't wait until it's all done," he said. "We have to move on this economic front." He added that approval of the trade legislation would give the United States new power over the Soviet Union to press for a final resolution on independence for Lithuania and the other Baltic states.

"When you open up new economic ties, you gain new strings," Mr. Gephardt said. "If the Soviet tanks roll into Lithuania six months later, you take the trade privileges away, it's a restraint on Gorbachev."

Leading American business groups,

including the United States Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers have been lobbying for approval of the agreement, warning that without it, American companies would be at a disadvantage in trying to gain access to the Soviet market. Conversely, lawmakers noted, it would be months, and perhaps years before the Soviet Union is really able to take much advantage of the reduced trade duties conferred under the pact, given the state of its economy and the poor quality of the goods it produces.

Once Mr. Bush submits the trade legislation to Congress, it is to be considered under special, expedited procedures that limit the amount of time for debate and prohibit amendments.